## CHURCH WEAKLY

## January 2023



# Church Weekly 

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## Fellowship News



## CONDOLENCES

The Alwaye Fellowship House offers our humble condolences and prayers on the demise of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI on 31.12.2022. He led the Catholic Church from 19.4.2005 to 28.2.2013 and offered to resign when his physical condition was not favourable, setting a model to all Bishops in the different Churches.

Dr. Milon Franz giving the Christmas message
The Christmas celebration at the Fellowship House was conducted on Friday, 16th December 2023, with DR. MILON FRANZ, Principal, St. Xavier's College for Women, Aluva, as the Chief Guest. The Fellowship House Ecumenical Choir rendered the Carols under the leadership Choir rendered the Carols under the leadership
of Sri Jacob Chirayil \& Sri Ajith P. Mathew. Sri Kuruvilla M. George, Secretary, Sri Santhosh
Oommen, Treasurer and Sri K.O. Elias, Convenor Kuruvilla M. George, Secretary, Sri Santhosh
Oommen, Treasurer and Sri K.O. Elias, Convenor spoke on the occasion.


Kuruvilla M George giving the New Year message In connection with the New Year, special prayers were conducted on Monday, $2^{\text {nd }}$ January 2023. Sri. K.O. Elias and Smt. Annamma Thomas led the prayer session. Sri Kuruvilla M. George, Secretary of the Fellowship House gave the New Year message.

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Rt. Rev. Dr. Abraham Mar Paulos Episcopa Diocesan Bishop
































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"Though difficulties, perplexities and discouragement may arise, never go back. Be brave when you are fighting the battles of life. Study to advance happiness. The warmth of true friendship is the love that binds heart to heart in the foretaste of the joys of heaven."




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## Solitary Walk

Fr. Dr. K.M. George

## "Morning after a Forest Fire"



DDesolation of mother nature is wrought by human greed. Deforestation is a major cause of ecological imbalance. Most forest fires killing tens of thousands of species of life, big and small, are part of the human design to subdue the earth and exploit its resources meant for generations of all living beings. The crisis of climate change is mostly the direct result of greedy human intervention in the rhythm of nature to sustain our unsustainable consumerist lifestyle. Eventually it is destruction of the biosphere shared by all creatures, and the end of all life on earth.

Still there is some hope if we human beings
repent here and now. The picture below symbolically alludes to a "morning after" and also shows a stream at the bottom of the burning forest. If we humans wisely exercise our freedom and respect for life there is still some way out, but hardly any time to wait and waste . This painting makes use of acrylic, dry twigs, cotton threads and even scraps of dry left-over paint from my old palette. It is inspired by the repeated warnings against deforestation by Sri Madhav Gadgil in the context of the recent floods, land slips and heavy casualties in Kerala.
(My thanks to the fellow artist members of CARP for their friendship and encouragement.)



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# Parables told to the chief priests, scribes and elders (contineed) 


"Now when the chief priests and Pharisees heard His parables, they perceived that He was speaking of them. But when they sought to lay hands on Him, they feared the multitudes, because they took Him for a prophet".

The symbolism of 'the nation without fruits' in a fig tree with plenty of leaves but no fruit is unmistakeable. Matthew was a Jew and he was deeply disappointed with the religious leadership that refused to believe what they were actually hearing and witnessing. Messiah was what they were waiting for. But then God's Messiah was not to their liking, not a political liberator.

For them, Matthew was a tax collector, sinner, and religion's outcast. For Matthew they were rejecting God's Messiah. For all their external show of religious fervour, strictly following rules and rituals, they had no spiritual insight - spiritually sterile and therefore fruitless - fruits are for others to see and enjoy.

Beware, we can easily put 'politics' above religion, religion above God, and doctrines above fruits of the kingdom and not even realise the incongruity. Those who assert that the kingdom of Heaven has not been established yet, but will be established only after the second coming, are, in my view, akin to those who failed to recognise the Messiah because He did not conform to their expectation. They probably
think that the fruits of the kingdom can wait until then.

## The parable of the wedding feast

(Matthew 22:1-14)
"And Jesus answered and spoke to them (chief priests, scribes, elders and Pharisees) again by parables and said: The kingdom of Heaven is like a certain king who arranged a marriage for his son, and sent out his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding and they were not willing to come. Again he sent out other servants, saying: tell those who are invited, see I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and fattened calf are killed, and all things are ready, come to the wedding. But they made light of it, and went their way, one to his own farm, another to his business. And the rest seized his servants, treated them spitefully, and killed them. But when the king heard about it, he was furious. And he sent out his armies, destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city. Then he said to his servants, the wedding is ready but those who were invited were not worthy. Therefore go into the highways and as many as you find, invite to the wedding. So those servants went out into the highways and gathered together all whom they found, both bad and good. And the wedding hall was filled with guests. But when the king came in to see the guests, he saw a man there who did not have on a wedding garment. So he

said to him: Friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then the king said to the servants, bind him hand and foot, take him away and cast him into outer darkness; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For, many are called but few are chosen."

These three parables were told to the leaders of the religion into which Jesus was born. His people were a nation, Israel, who believed they were God's chosen nation. They were expecting and hoping for the establishment of the kingdom of God. If they had that kingdom of God, they surely would be invincible. They were proud of their heritage - David the great warrior-poet-king was a distant ancestor. They yearned for becoming once again a powerful nation under a king sent by God.

The king came as God's incarnation, Word of God born human in flesh and blood. Their religion had moved so far from the path of righteousness, mutual love and service. Religiosity overshadowed their unique calling. Animal sacrifices replaced inner renewal. Rituals became more important than mercy and compassion. So Jesus did a most marvellous thing: He made a universal religion emerge out of the Jewish nation - as a butterfly emerges from its chrysalis. Many believed, were baptised and joined the fellowship of the kingdom of God. But the leaders of the religion did not budge. They had decided to get rid of Jesus by hook or by crook.
"Then the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders of the people assembled at the palace of the high priest, who was Caiaphas, and plotted to take Jesus by trickery and kill Him. But they said, not during the Feast, lest there be an uproar among the people"
(Matthew 26: 3-5). Assassination was unavoidable. Many a time Jesus had wind of such plots and eluded the plotters. This time Jesus had His own design for the culmination of his earthly ministry - he wanted his execution to coincide with the festival of Passover when a lamb would be sacrificed -in broad daylight, in public view.

John the Baptist had already identified Jesus's role, when he said: "Behold the Lamb of God." John was quoting Isaiah: "He was led as a lamb to the slaughter" (Isaiah 53: 7)

## Kingdom of God, righteousness and fruits

Our meditation is on the kingdom of God and now we can perceive what Jesus meant when He said kingdom of God (and kingdom of Heaven) repeatedly on many occasions and under different circumstances and to different groups of listeners. We, believers and followers of Jesus, are the kingdom citizens. We are in it for bearing fruits, and, as vinedressers (or stewards) it is our duty to give them all to God, the real owner.

A religion founded by one man would have the moorings of linguistic and geographic limits and constraints. If a name is assigned for God, in a language, then the religion has its identity tied to a particular country or group of countries. If God is named Father, then God is universal. The religion called Kingdom of God that emerged from Judaism became a universally acceptable idea, concept and way of life and living. Jesus the Christ being its king, the adoption of the name Christian is quite appropriate, provided Christians know their religion is truly the kingdom of God.
(To be continued)

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# And the Word was made Flesh 

(Continued)

So again, let me emphasize the necessity of Christ's brethren claiming this inestimable privilege which their Master came to this world to bestow upon them. We are to partake of the Holy Mysteries "till he come again." We are not told to go to Church to watch a drama. We are not meant merely to let the priest offer the memorial for us. I sometimes think that many of our Qurbanas are defective because there are so often no communicants to receive the divine gifts with the Priest.

For the reception of the Sacrament is part of God's plan to enable the devout Christian to appropriate that salvation won by our Christ once for all on Calvary's Tree. When our Lord from the Rood uttered the loud cry: It is finished, he proclaimed the fact that there was nothing else for he himself to perform, as regards his own redemptive work. He had fought the battle: he had won the victory: he had set the chain of defeat upon the neck of the adversary. For though Satan would still play havoc among the children of men in the short time at his disposal, yet his activities would be still more curtailed and God's earthly sons and daughters would be able to put him and his hosts to flight in the power of the cross and by virtue of the means of Grace. Therefore when the Sacrament is received by the devout communicant, the completed work of salvation is appropriated by the individual who participates in the divine mysteries. Thus the Body and Blood of Christ preserve the body and soul of man unto
everlasting life. It can be seen that here is an Incarnation of Christ, for as the earthly elements enter the blood stream of the recipient and become part of his physical being, so likewise the Lord's divinity is enshrined within a human frame and Man again is the Living Temple of the Saviour of the World.

I cannot understand why members of this ancient communion are prepared to go week after week, sometimes year after year, without receiving the Most Comfortable Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ. I think this often springs from a feeling of unworthiness. But the most perfect Christian in the world is yet a great sinner in the eyes of the Creator. All of us are as "filthy rags", and "unclean vessels" in God's sight. Yet it was for us that Christ was born: for us Christ died upon the Cross: for us he instituted his Sacraments of love-the seven golden pipes conveying God's grace from his celestial store house to our terrestrial granaries. Within our earthly tabernacles, Holy Church dispenses the mysteries of God's Kingdom to those who in faith, desire to receive them. Sacraments are for sinners, not for sinless ones. It is true that Christians are made potential saints by virtue of the initiatory Sacrament of Holy Baptism but though it is our desire to be perfect, that consummation will not be ours until time shall be no more and Christ hath received the Kingdoms of this world. Nevertheless we can grow day by day more like our Blessed Lord, and frequent feeding upon him in the Holy

Eucharist will bring that consummation nearer also. Also there is the question of obedience. Do this in remembrance of Me, until I come: Unless ye eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood ye have no life in you.

But there is something else which keeps us away from the Lord's Table, and this is bound up with the sense of unworthiness. We are aware of our failure in our Christian profession. We know that we are miserable sinners, but we aslo know that there is a Sacrament instituted by Christ to meet this need. In the Sacrament of Absolution we can receive the assurance of forgiven sin. For when Christ bestowed the priesthood upon the Apostles, he gave them the power of the keys. "Whose sins thou dost forgive they are forgiven, whose sins thou dost retain, they are retained." This power was mediated by the Apostles to their successors and at every ordination this "Carisma" is bestowed upon the newly ordained priest. The strange thing is that in our Church bishops and Monks are not encouraged to make use of that grace, which is so emphasised in the Ordination Office. Be that as it may, the laity do not seem to resort as frequently to the Sacrament of Confession as would appear necessary.

Many have told me that they have little respect for their priests. Of course, they recognise their ordination and will present themselves at Church for baptisms, weddings and for the offering of the Holy Qurbana (to watch the Elevation, but not to receive the Sacrament). These things they must do, else they will be 'outside the pale'. But to confess before a Priest whom they neither trust nor honour, this they will not do. Nevertheless whatever the cause, few confessions are heard and consequently few acts of communion are made. Perhaps the only exception is during the Lenten season.

We must learn at any rate that the worthiness or unworthiness of the minister does not affect the nature of the Sacrament. For if it did, then how many baptisms would be valid? how many marriages? what would be the use of Holy Unction or of the anointing with the Holy Moorron? Either the priesthood confers grace upon the receivers of its ministration or it does not and every day man should ask himself: am I worthy of my Christian calling? Do I live up to my own Priesthood? For all of us are made kings and priests unto God. Of this I am sure: that until, we, in this Church, accept our privileges and responsibilities in this matter of attendance upon the Table of Lord, there will be a continued lack of progress and our disunity will increase by leaps and bounds. We are a divided community and until we stand side by side and partake frequently of the Sacrament of Unity, despite our prayer "let us give peace and unity one to another with a divine and holy kiss", we shall go on being content with our divisions.

I think if we are in truth faithful communicants, then we shall find that the love of Christ within us will overflow and encompass our neighbours whether Christian or non-Christian. For I think we miss the truth of the Incarnation by our isolation.

I was staying with a Syrian Bishop one day and I wanted to visit a church which was about 200 yards from his house. I asked him if he would accompany me thither and he declined stating that it was not the custom for a Bishop to come in contact with all and sundry in this way. I said quietly: "I wonder if the Master would have made such a statement". Surely the Lord rejoiced when the common people came about him. I know of one Bishop (not of our church) who is loved and revered for his work of healing in this land of India. I know how he walks from place to place unattended. I know that his
contact with the multitudes has only increased the veneration in which he is held, not only in India but in every part of the world.

But this sense of "superiority" is not only the possession of Bishops, but of the whole of our community. I, as an Englishman, away from my own land, living among you, have felt it time and time again. The people of the Church make plans for this and that and all the time Christ is waiting in some house we have no time to visit, and looking at us through the eyes of some young lad we are too busy to get to know. I remember a young man coming to me at a convention to speak of serious things. He said "Father you will not laugh at me or turn away as people of our church do for they have no time to listen". Is that true? And what about the non-christian in our midst? It is not easy to 'go out' but if the love of Christ is in our hearts we shall not be able to stay at home. Our Lord is out there with the common people. He lived for them and died for them: the other sheep who are not of this fold. Only by seeking them out shall we again find him, the eternal Son of God, who became incarnate of the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, Mother of God. Love as man came down at Christmas that he might find and save us all.

Thou didst leave thy throne and
thy kingly crown
Then thou camest to earth for me, But in Bethlehem's house was
there found no room
For thy holy Nativity.
O come to my heart, Lord Jesus,
There is room in my heart for Thee. ©

## Young Warld Indu John



Life is a road with gutters; Not easy, it is, for all.
Take it not as tragedy to shudder; Make it easy for others, be our goal.

Heaven descends on earth
When life is easy for all.
Really, it's a gift of worth
If we are able not to fall.
Life is like a red rose
Bloomed to its ultimate.
Trouble - the thorns on the rose, Remove them on all climate. Life is a gift given by God

To live or to live not.
Try not to make it a load, Disasters may come, a lot.
Tremble not near its face, Tumble it down to make way. Show not any haste, As it is not the right way.
Move ahead to victory as goal, Conquer the hearts of others. Create not in your life a hole, Life may fly away like a feather.

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> everyone to whom much is given, of him much will be required;... (Luke 12:48).

The above verse from St. Luke's gospel often leaves me greatly worried, because much has been given to me. Have I been able to do some justice to God's expectations about me? Honestly speaking, there should be many others who feel the same way about themselves. It is most likely that if someone has no such apprehensions, it is because he has not realized the magnitude of the blessings he has received from God; he has obviously been taking too many things for granted! For example, if he does not feel grateful to God for all his five senses working properly, he has not taken into account the large number of people who are not blessed with proper vision or hearing. And, what about all the good health you enjoy? When you have received something without having to work or ask for it, you easily fall into the danger of taking it for granted; you don't realize how profusely God has blessed you! This is the reason why the apprehension of falling short of what is expected of you does not nag you. If it does not nag you, you run the danger of living a very complacent, inadequate life. Life is a precious gift from God; you are accountable to God for how you live it; every moment of it has to be spent in the consciousness of its value.

How many of us are aware of the value of each moment? If we don't use it while it lasts, it is gone forever; it will not be available any more for our use. We have no such concern when we idle away long hours of our time without a care in the world! This does not mean
that we have to turn ourselves into workaholics; hours of rest are needed for living a proper life. What has to be resisted is a lazy attitude which prevents you from being concerned about fulfilling your duties. Duty-consciousness is a great Christian virtue. If you have the tendency to be negligent, check it immediately; never lose sight of the preciousness of life, of each moment; it is this attitude towards time that is of importance. If you look around, you are sure to see a lot that can and should be done by you. It is just that you have not looked around.

The wrong attitude towards how you spend time could be like an addiction to drugs, for example; once you fall a prey to it, the attitude of negligence will grow deeper and deeper, and eventually you will get pulled into its depths, without ever being able to come out of it. So beware! The only way you can prevent this happening to you is by deliberately cultivating within you a consciousness about the unfathomable value of life - all the blessings God has bestowed upon you, without your having had to ask for them: the shelter and the food and the clothing - the comfort of a home, a family and loved ones - and everything you enjoy! Remember that there are a great many people who suffer without these, for no fault of theirs! Their value is not counted when you have them. Learn to count your blessings. The most important thing you have to pray for is the gift of gratitude. Request God to give you gratitude in your mind, and all the other blessings should follow in its wake. It may not be a bad idea to make this your New Year resolution, so that you are sure of a New Year with no regrets! Remember that a great deal is expected of you!

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# The Promised Land and the Temple Mount 

In the Bible, in Samuel 24:18-24, there is a record of an incident where King David was asked by prophet Gad to go up and build an altar to the Lord in the threshing floor of Araunah, the Jebusite. David went up as the Lord had commanded through Gad. David bought the threshing floor and the oxen and paid 50 Shekels of silver which amounts to 0.6 Kg of silver.

In 1 Chronicles 21:25 it says that David paid 600 Shekels of gold for the site; that is about 7 kg of gold. The price may not be just for the threshing floor but for a larger area.

2 Chronicles 3:51 says that King Solomon began to build the Temple of the Lord in Jerusalem on Mt. Moriah, where the Lord appeared to his father David. It was on the threshing floor of Araunah, the Jebusite, the place acquired by David.

In Genesis 22:2 we read that Abraham was commanded by the Lord to sacrifice his son Isaac on Mount Moriah. This place which David bought was called Mt. Zion. This is now called the Temple Mount.

Since the place was bought by David it belongs to the people of Israel, legally. The Promised Land of Canaan belongs to them because God gave it to them.

When the Israelites reached the plain of Moab, Moses the servant of the Lord gave the
land of Sihon, the King of Amorites, and Og, the king of Bashan, to the tribes of Reuben, Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh, to be their possession. This was on the east side of River Jordan, which the Israelites conquered. On the west side of Jordan Joshua gave the land of Canaan to the remaining $91 / 2$ tribes, conquering the lands of 31 kings. The Levites were given towns and pasture lands among the tribes. The size of the land given to the Israelites is recorded in the book of Joshua, Chapters 12 to 19. This land was given to them as an inheritance, by the Lord.

This land was promised by the Lord to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as an inheritance to their descendants many years (more than 700 years) before the division of land (Gen 17:8). The Lord said to Abraham, "The whole land of Canaan, where you are now an alien, I will give as an everlasting possession to you and your descendants after you." This oath and promise were confirmed to Isaac (Gen 26:3) and to Jacob (Gen 28:19).

When the Israelites disobeyed the Lord and did evil in His sight He punished them by scattering them into the four corners of the world in AD 70 . On May 14, 1948, God brought them back to form the nation Israel. Even though other nations occupied the promised land during the time the Israelites were absent, the land belongs to them rightfully.



Whhenever we meet somebody, we would like to know "Who are you?" and "What are you?" We may not ask directly, but we will try some subtle ways to know it, before entering into serious interaction. If someone asks us whether we have identified him, we will for courtesy sake, nod yes but our mind will be exploring decent ways of getting a clue.

In our early school days, teachers used to ask "Who is your father?", and it was easy to answer because the answer is the father's name. But I was puzzled when they asked me, "What is your father?" My innocent answer was "He is a man!", Then they taught me that the answer lay in defining my father, mainly on the basis of his profession.

Jesus Christ once asked his disciples, (ref. Matt. 16: 13, 15) "Who do men say that the Son of man is?", and "Who say ye that I am?" We also come across such situations when we yearn to know what others think of us. So we may ask our close friends, what others think of us. Their answer may be pleasent or unpleasent. But when we ask them what they themselves think of us! Even if you ask they will avoid a direct answer and present their own impressions as another's view.

Now, when a year ends and we start our journey into the New Year, it is time we ask ourselves "Who am I?" and "What
am I?" When Smt. Draupadi Murmu became the President of India, one of my friends said, "She is only 64, and she has become the President of India; here I am past 64, a useless retired man!" It took me some time to convince him that he is also somebody.

At some point of time, this question stares at us: Are you satisfied with your life? Do you feel you have accomplished something? The track of each person's life differs and so do our accomplishments. But remember, what we have achieved is our own achievement; what we have accomplished is our own accomplishment! If you still feel dissatisfied, just see whether there is enough time and wherewithal to achieve what you wanted. If there is, try to go ahead towards the goal without wasting time. If you can't be satisfied with what you are and what you have, avoid blaming yourself. We cannot be everywhere, we can't achieve what all others have achieved. We can be happy and content, if and only if we choose to be happy and content.

The heights by great men reached and kept Were not attained by sudden flight, But they, while their companions slept, Were toiling upward in the night
(Henry Wadsworth Long Fellow).
Have a Happy and contented New Year.
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